DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 177 PS 014 225

AUTHOR Swick, Kevin J.; Land, Betty Lou
TITLE The Long Term Influence of a Kindergarten Parent Involvement Program.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Southern Association on Children Under Six (35th, Lexington, KY, March 8-10, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Reading; Comparative Analysis; Grade 1; Grade 2; Grade 3; *Kindergarten Children; Longitudinal Studies; *Parent Participation; Primary Education; *Reading Achievement
IDENTIFIERS *Right to Read

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study was conducted to compare the reading achievement of students involved in the Right-to-Read Project with that of those not involved in the project. Specifically, to assess the long term effects on pupils whose parents participated in a program stressing parent involvement in the learning process, measures of the achievement of kindergarten children in three school districts were taken after 1, 2, and 3 years of participation. Students in stanines 1, 2, and 3 on the Metropolitan Readiness Test were selected under the assumption that they would most likely experience difficulty in school tasks. Results indicated no significant differences across the three districts over the 3-year span or between program participants and nonparticipants. Implications for educators include suggestions for the design of parent education/involvement/participation programs. (BJD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

THE LONG TERM INFLUENCE OF A KINDERGARTEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

ED241177

Kevin J. Swick, Ph.D.
Early Childhood Education
College of Education
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

Betty Lou Land, Ph.D.
Early Childhood Education
School of Education
Winthrop College
Rock Hill, South Carolina

PS 014225

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Kevin J. Swick
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the Southern Association on Children Under Six Annual Conference. March, 1984, Lexington, Kentucky.

THE LONG TERM INFLUENCE OF A KINDERGARTEN PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

The fact that some students fail to benefit from beginning reading instruction while other students profit from the same instruction has been a concern of educators throughout the years. Various factors influence a child's readiness to capitalize on formal school experiences. These factors include physical, mental health, mental ability, motivational, and educational factors of background experiences and language development. Correlational studies show relationships between these factors and reading achievement (Harris & Sipay, 1980). A big influence on these factors has been explored by numerous researchers and that area is the effect of home environment on a child's success with beginning reading (Watson, 1981; Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983).

Since the home seems to have a dramatic influence on children's school success, educators began training programs for parents with the plan that increasing parenting skills would increase the possibility that pupils would come to initial school experiences "ready" for instruction. While many researchers have reported successful outcomes of parent involvement programs (Berlin & Berlin, 1975; Goodson & Hess, 1975; Gordon, 1975; Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983) other researchers report a lack of evidence to support the merits of parent involvement (Leveridge, 1979; Palmer, 1973; Wade, 1980).

Very few longitudinal studies in this area have been conducted. Mainly projects are designed to deal with an immediate, short term goal and use a pre-post-test design to assess behavior changes in parents and children. The long term effects of parent training on the reading achievement of the child after the program was completed needed to be

examined. Thus, a question was formed: Does involvement in a parent training project by a child's parent(s) during the child's kindergarten school year offer long term effects that reach into first, second and third grade with respect to reading achievement of the child?

The South Carolina Region V Right to Read Project (which included five school districts) provided a natural setting in which to investigate the long term influences of a parent involvement program. The project was designed to identify skills that a child lacked and to develop school and home based learning activities to help the child master the needed skills. Aides were employed to help implement the project and served under the direction of kindergarten teachers and a project director. The aides were to work directly with the project students and to help parents learn through home and school visits to constructively play/work with their child. The plan was to have two training contacts with each parent each month and to send an appropriate learning activity home with each child each week. Analysis of Metropolitan Reading Test scores of children in all five school districts showed that while children in the treatment group (in two of the districts) did score higher than the control group; no significant differences were found in any of the participants. Since there was no longitudinal study design planned, the following purpose for this study was formulated.

Statement of the Problem

The specific problem addressed in this study was: Is there a difference between reading achievement of Group A students (those involved in the Right to Read Project - 1979) when compared to Group B students (those not involved in the project)? Specifically, achievement of the children in

each district, one, two and three years after the program ended was examined to see if there were long term effects on pupils whose parents were in a program that stressed parent involvement in the learning process.

A null hypothesis was generated from the problem statement: There will be no differences in pupil scores on appropriate reading achievement tests between the treatment and control groups in the school districts involved in the study over a three year period of time.

Overview of the Study

The design of this study was a quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Tuckman, 1972). All children were enrolled in kindergarten in the 1978-79 school year. The Right-to-Read Project pre-tested pupils in the fall of 1978 using the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT). Children in the first, second and third stanines on this measure were assigned to the experimental group or the control group depending on their school district. There were no statistical differences according to stanine placement in the groups on the MRT pre-test in any district. The control and experimental groups in each district were matched. The experimental or treatment group children were involved in learning activities directed to teach them specific skills and their parents were given instruction in conducting learning activities at home that were identified on the Carolina Developmental Profile. The control group did not have these same advantages, although no data were collected to show what experiences they had. In the spring of 1979, a posttest, the MRT, was given (see Table 1). Significant differences were shown in achievement (at the .01 level) by pupils in the control in Chester and Lancaster school districts

but no statistical differences in achievement were found in the other school districts (see Table 2).

In 1982, after the end of the third grade for the children, further data was collected. These are the data reported in this longitudinal study. The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) was administered in 1980 (end of grade one). The South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Test (SC-BSAT) was administered in 1981 and 1982 (end of grade 2 and then end of grade 3). See Table 3.

Sample

In the original design children from five school districts (Lancaster, Kershaw, Fairfield, Chester and Richland II) were involved in the Right-to-Read Project. Because of inadequate record keeping two school districts (Richland II and Fairfield) had to be deleted from the study. Subjects for the study were identified, as stated previously, according to their stanine score on the MRT. Students in stanines 1, 2 and 3 were selected to be in the project for they were considered to be pupils who would most likely experience difficulty with school tasks. The subjects live in either Chester, Kershaw or Lancaster counties in South Carolina. Table 4 shows the characteristics of kindergarten children enrolled in the Right-to-Read Project.

Treatment

For the participants in the Right-to-Read Project (1978-79), specific skill deficiencies of each pupil were identified using the MRT and the CDP. Kindergarten aides were to prescribe learning activities designed to teach children the skills they lacked. Some of the activities included "in-school"

instruction where aides taught specific skills to the children. "Out-of-School" activities included learning games that were sent home to be used by the parent and child.

The parent involvement component of the program included group training sessions where parents were trained to work/play with their children using the tote bags or other materials. Data gathered from the project shows that 88% of the parents reported participating with their children in project designed home learning activities and that 71% of the parents attended school sponsored parent training sessions (SC Region V 1978-79, p. 22).

Parents were also given training at home. Kindergarten aides made 1,005 home visits (SC Region V 1978-79, p. 22) during which time they demonstrated constructive ways to work/play with preschoolers. On an evaluation form used at the end of the project, 100% of the parents reported they had used the home learning activities and 100% said they would continue using what they had learned about "teaching" their child after the project ended.

Again the question arises that <u>if</u> parents had "teaching" skills (as a result of this training) and <u>if</u> parents had continued "teaching" their child, would there be long term effects in achievement realized by the students after the project was completed? This study following the progress of these pupils through grade three attempted to answer the questions that had arisen.

Statistical Procedures

For each child, data were collected on his/her 1980 CTBS (total reading score), on the 1981 and 1982 SC-BSAT--reading portion, total number right. A percent correct on each instrument for each child was calculated. A mean score for the treatment group and a mean score for the control group in each

district was completed for each instrument: 1980 CTBS, 1981 SC-BSAT and 1982 SC-BSAT. A t-test was used to see if a significant difference (.05 level) existed between the experimental and control group on any instrument in each district. These results were plotted on a graph to examine trends in each district over four years.

Results

An analysis of the mean scores across districts shows no pattern to the results (see Table 5). The null hypothesis is accepted. In Lancaster and Chester where control groups had scored significantly higher on the MRT at the end of kindergarten, an interesting change happened at the end of grade one where the experimental group's progress was readily seen. In Chester after an equalizing period in grade one, the treatment group began to have a higher mean score, although it was not significantly higher in any year. In Lancaster the most dramatic change occurred with the experimental group scoring significantly higher in grade one and then no apparent differences seen at the end of grade two or three. In Kershaw the control group continued to outscore the treatment group, although only the second grade year was significantly different. By grade three, there were only three percentage points difference in the mean scores (see Table 6).

Discussion

Two issues emerge from this study that will be discussed in the following paragraphs. One is that the findings here are different from much of the research that has been done on parent involvement. The other issue deals with why this project did not statistically produce the learning success that was planned.

The results of this study contradict the findings of other research that report of similar parent involvement programs that have signficant effects on pupil achievement (Berlin & Berlin, 1975; Clegg, 1973; Comptroller General, 1979; Darbi, 1980; Gordon, 1969; Irvine, 1979). The question can be asked "Why did this Right-to-Read Project have limited success? Many reasons may have contributed to the lack of significance.

In examining project operations the following items emerged as possibly related to the minimal success of the program. The selection, training and use of the teacher aides was less than desirable and probably influenced the parent involvement component in a negative direction. For example, "interpersonal skills" was a top priority used in selection of aides. However, teaching skills and child development knowledge were not placed in this same context and consequently many of the aides had difficulty in planning home visits and in planning activities for this age child (SC Region V--1978-79, p. 16). As Swick (1984) points out the training and use of home visitors must include all of the areas of the teaching-learning process: interpersonal skills, planning, implementation, assessment and managerials skills.

Another reason for the lack of success (as measured statistically) of this project can be attributed to the number of contacts with parents within the project year. Only in Chester did 100% of the parents receive at least eight training contacts which was the goal of the project.* In Kershaw, 62% of the parents had at least the minimum of eight contacts and in Lancaster only 54% of the parents had the minimum of eight contacts.

---

*It is worth noting that while not statistically signficant, the treatment group in Chester showed steady gains each year through grade 3. Even considering the use of different tests, the steady gains are notable.

The minimum of eight visits must be questioned in terms of "teaching time" with each family. In the case of this project both the quality and quantity of home visitations appear to have been less than what is needed to establish long range improvements in parental skills.

Analysis and Implications

Implications for educators include a look at studies intended to offer quick answers to complex problems, suggestions for the design of parent education/involvement/participation programs, and further research concerns in this area of parent involvement in the education of their children.

Many projects attempted in educational systems have been deficient because they lack a follow through component. For example, in training parents to work/play with their children in a directed effort, a continuous, long term effort must be maintained (Landry, Lazar, & Shapiro, 1981; Wade, 1980). It is unrealistic to expect parents to internalize certain teaching strategies in a few sessions. For example, if an aide taught a parent to help a child with auditory discrimination, it can not be assumed that parents will know how this skill fits into a hierarchy of other skills or how to teach the child the other skills that should follow.

When planning programs involving parents, careful attention must be given to training those who work with the parents. If paraprofessionals are used in parent education programs, extensive tutelage must be given not only in the area of interpersonal skills, but also in the area of child growth and development and in explanation of skill sequence.

Professionals prepared for early childhood should monitor activities for use by pupils prescribed by aides, to assure that the activity is appropriate for the child (Swick, 1984.

When projects, such as the Right-to-Read 1979, are implemented, prime consideration should be given to planning the program content for parent involvement with their child. Attention must be given to the teaching activities that the parent and child are to do together. Learning activities must be ones that focus on desired learning outcomes, that "match" the need of the learner in terms of interest and skill development, and that offer the child and the parent success experience together.

Handling the mechanics of parent involvement programs and the details of special projects in schools is another important matter; one that should be dealt with in training sessions with the staff who will carry out the program. For example, in the Right-to-Read Project examined in this study poor record keeping was a major problem. Additional organizational problems included communication with parents regarding home visit schedules and follow-up times for parents to attend school activities. An effective training program could have prevented many of these problems and increased the impact of the program design on children's achievement.

Additional issues emerged from this study regarding the conducting of research on parents, teachers and their collaboration in parent involvement programs. One issue involves the influence of society on children and their families and the other deals with the noncognitive area of growth and development; especially as this development is related to the parent-child and parent-teacher-child arrangement.

The impact of societal trends on parent functioning which in turn effects children through their relationship with parents, neighbors and other important adults needs to be continuously studied. In this study, for example, what influence did community expectations have on the parents in terms of encouraging or discouraging improved functioning on the part of the parents. Watson, Brown, & Swick (1983) report that parents who experience supportive relationships with their neighbors are more likely to function effectively in home-school involvement programs. The work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) supports this notion that "supportive social systems" facilitate a positive spiral of parental development.

Another research area in need of serious study is the noncognitive facets of parent functioning (Anderson, 1981). Research to date has focused on cognitive gains made in children as the result of parent training programs. The exception is the work of Schaefer (1979, 1983) which has concentrated on parental locus of control as related to various facets of the parent-child relationship and the parent-teacher arrangement. An examination of parental beliefs/values needs continual examination.

Anderson, L. Assessing affective characteristics in the schools. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1981.

Berlin, R., & Berlin, I. School's training of parents to be effective teachers of their own and other nonlearning children. Arlington, Va.: 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 099110).

Bronfenbrenner, U. The ecology of human development. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Clegg, B. The effectiveness of learning games used by economically disadvantaged parents to increase the reading achievement of their children. New Orleans: 1973. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 085656).

Comptroller General. Early childhood and family development programs improve the quality of life for low-income families (Publication No. HRD-79-40). Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1979.

Cook, T., & Campbell, D. Quasi-experimental design and analysis issues for field settings. Chicago: Rand McNally College, 1979.

Darabi, T. Effects of a program of father-child and mother-child reading on children's reading readiness. In Reading and Study Skills and Instruction: Preschool and Elementary: Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations Published in "Dissertation Abstracts International" July through December 1980 (Vol. 41 Nos. 1 through 6). 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 197 312).

Goodson, B., & Hess, R. Parents as teachers of young children: an evaluative review of some contemporary concepts and programs. 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 134 967).

Gordon, I. Early child stimulation through parent education. Florida University Gainesville: 1969. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 038 166).

Gordon, I. The Florida parent education early intervention programs: a longitudinal look. Florida University,Gainesville: 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 100 492).

Harris, A., & Sipay, E. How to increase reading ability. (7th ed.). New York: Longman, 1980.

Irvine, D. Parent involvement affects children's cognitive growth. The New York State Education Department: Division of Research, August, 1979.

Lazar, I. Summary: The persistence of preschool effects. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977.

Loveridge, R. Parent involvement in preschool education: asset or liability. San Francisco, Ca.: 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 176 849).

Palmer, F. Theory and policy of preschool intervention programs. In Richard Marshall Dunham, Toward a public policy for the family. Department of psychology. Florida State University. Tallahassee, 1973.

Schaefer, E., & Edgerton, M. Parent interview and sociodemographic predictors of adaptation and achievement. Paper presented at American Psychological Association Annual Convention, New York, September, 1979.

Schaefer, E., & Hunter, W. Childrearing and child development correlates of maternal locus of control. Paper presented at American Psychological Association Annual Meeting, Anaheim, California, August, 1983.

South Carolina Region V Educational Services Center. Program performance report 1978-79--Right to Read. CDFA Number 13.533G. Grant Number G00780094. Lancaster, South Carolina.

Swick, K. Inviting parents into the young child's world. Champaign, Ill.: Stipes Publishing, 1984.

Tuckman, B. Conducting educational research. Atlanta: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovch, 1972.

Wade, B. Parent education: does it make a difference? Nashville, Tn: 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 190 990).

Watson, T. The relationship between home support and neighborhood support and the achievement of children entering first grade. Columbia, S.C.: College of Education, University of South Carolina, 1981.

Watson, T., Brown, M., & Swick, K. The relationship of parents' support to children's school achievement. Child Welfare 62 (1983): 175-180.